



THURSDAY 6 april
Tel Aviv & Herzliya, Israel
Today's guide: Diana Dallal



First stop: Einat Leader

We meet Einat Leader at her home, she has a studio on the top floor. Briefly we meet her teenage daughter as well. Leader is a (jewelry) artist and teacher and was head of jewelry and fashion department at Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design. She studied industrial design as well and is a writer and curator of student exhibitions.

She made a book with David Goss. The book, *Borrowed Syndrome*, departs from two texts about South Africa and Israel, since Goss is from South Africa too. There are twelve texts from artists in it.

Einat Leader started her practice with drawings, after graduating mid-1990's. Now she's focusing on bodies, walls and discrimination. She also worked on a project around former Palestinian villages which are now the Tel Aviv area, which she shows with small tin sculptures.

Her practice and teaching are about making statements, also through jewelry. This might be unconventional, she feels. But she finds it important to reflect on the socio-political situation, also through this.

Her works evoke the regional tensions. For example small objects made from olive pits covered with graphite, serve as a metaphor for the doves - a symbol for peace and freedom - not being 'white' anymore. Also she makes wooden objects representing camels, an important animal in Jerusalem's culture. She feels its time for making statements.



Second: Guy Avital

Guy Avital has a spacious studio in a building that's partly a parking lot. He welcomes us with water and cookies. Avital works mainly with painting and collage. We encounter large-scale canvasses right when we enter. Studio photography of geometrical objects is a starting point as well, which comes back in his collages especially. He sees them as a collision of painting and photography.

Painting has a very spiritual meaning for Avital, because 'it doesn't have time'. In a way it's obsolete. Also it's a great way to deal with abstract ideas, as he sees it. Half of his paintings are about this, but they are also about exploring the significance of the discipline.

The 'potential of catastrophe' is a recurring theme as well. He reconciles certain feelings in his paintings - an example is the shift in the perception of reality, after the floods of 2008.

Another question that he investigates is what it means to 'enjoy' the aesthetics of terror related to the holocaust, for example Albert Speer's architecture or the Hugo Boss production of SS-uniforms. In addition Avital is interested in developments and the history of the first half of the 20th century and the modernists.

For Avital photography is about death rather than capturing life. Painting is not about representation, he concludes. For him, it's about a meeting point of different moments in time. Geometrical shapes have their local heritage; Arabic arts have a very graphical language because of the rule not to directly represent things. This creates a tense relation

with both Western art history and abstract painting in general.



Studio visit: Eitan Ben Moshe

We are enthusiastically welcomed by Eitan Ben Moshe's dog. His studio is located in a half-demolished building. We enter a large atelier consisting of three separate rooms. It's packed with furniture, materials, canvasses, sculptures etc. It's not necessarily clear what's finished and what isn't. It's like we entered the inside of Ben Moshe's head. Full of energy and weird ideas. Another reality. A laboratory. Movie set. Magic.

His practice seems all over the place, but when he starts to talk about a recent piece - an animation following an intervention with abstract objects around buildings - things get sorted out more. Ben Moshe elaborates on the signs ruling our urban environments, and thus juxtaposes the abstract and the geometrical with the organic and the formless. Somehow this comes together in what we see here happening and presented in his studio. It's all fairly alienating. Fantasy and imagination. He creates some sort of bodies, limbs or extensions that seem to be originated in another world - likely with the aim to disrupt the spectator's reality.

This first video / intervention we see has a political motivation as well. The black flag is a response to the outcome of the 2015 elections and the racism and polarization which is related to it.

Popular culture is a huge interest. He recalls for example the American action movie World War Z. Israel's obsession with the past and present lacks time for fantasy and science fiction - apparently 'when the ground is burning it's a privilege to dream and fantasize'.

On a table we see a large installation with plastic, glass and light. It shows something reminiscent of a butterfly, amongst others. Ben Moshe recalls how he's into Zen and meditation and makes a reference to the motive of 'the portal' coming forward here and in other works. Crystals - utopian structures in nature, to him - he sees as the most beautiful 'abstract' art in nature.

For his video project *Ozone Floods* he searched for local shamans in foreign cities. He made it himself and used low tech aesthetics as well as reference to cult sci-fi B films. The essence of art: why are we interested in the field? It needs to change the city, and life in itself.



Inga Gallery

It's around noon and hot. We walk on big streets, large modernist housing blocks. Yellow and beige. Not so many people on the streets.

Director Karin Shabtai welcomes us in her gallery. White walls, grey tiles, glass doors.

The gallery was founded 10 years ago in the center of Tel Aviv. They relocated to this area 6 years ago and started the galleries move to this neighborhood: Kiryat Hamelacha (south TLV).

They show artists from all over the world besides representing Israeli artists, for example artists from Kenya, Angola, and China.

The artist on show is Masha Zusman. She comes from Russia and moved here in the nineties. We see wooden panels painted over with abstract compositions. She avoids text and aims for reduction with color and form. This also relates to her upbringing in which she often encountered abstract decoration.

The gallery tries to bring together artists from different backgrounds, from photography to video and painting et cetera. Tonight one of their artists, Leigh Orpaz, will show new video works at the Helena Rubinstein pavilion opening.



Lunch: Iranian soup with slow cooked beef. Various rice dishes. Vegetables and pickles. Also - vegan chocolate sorbet.



Studio: Uri Nir

Uri Nir's work is spread over the past 30 years. He works also as a teacher at several art schools and universities in Tel Aviv. He is currently preparing a show at Ein Harod Museum. His daughter had slightly odd ears. He scanned them and magnified, as a starting point in his work. For example in images, doubled as a butterfly, but also as 'floating' sculptures hanging from the ceiling.

He then shows a video made during a vacation in Thailand. The camera follows the butterflies, while we hear sound bites taken from a voice recording of his daughter's sleeping noises.

He also works a lot with props. For example catacomb replicas used in a video. Another video shows a homeless men looking at a floating, circling egg, while atonal music is played.

Outside we say goodbye to dear co-traveller Stijn Huijts who's going back to Maastricht now.



Final stop: Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art

We are welcomed by the director, Dr. Aya Lurie, and two exhibiting artists. On show currently are 7 solo exhibitions. Lurie describes the museum as a peripheral institution. Before we enter, we reflect on the front facade with a sculpture garden now under construction.

Ben Gurion describes Israel as a multicultural society, which has nothing to do with reality as Lurie says, however - this utopian vision is much reflected in art and art collections. The theme of construction, coming forward in the arte povera related work (Yakov Dorchin) in the front garden, is an example of this.

1. Ronit Porat - Mr. Ulbrich and Miss Neumann

Ronit Porat's installation reminds one of Surrealist projects around photography. She reconstructed amongst others a stereoscopic device. The question is posed how we can focus on specific perspectives while dismissing others, through photography. She presents in parallel two stories, of assaulter Mr. Ulbrich and Miss Neumann, his victim.

2. Hilla Ben Ari - Rethinking Broken Lines

An installation with 11 videos featuring one dancer, Heda Oren. Central to his work is the female body and the identity of growing up in the ideological society of the kibbutz, bringing utopian visions and the body together, private versus collective.

3. Mundi_Lab

Architecture researchers explore different public spaces, this is an ongoing project now presented in the context of the Herzliya Museum. Four questions: security and surveillance, gentrification (in Haifa specifically), play as empowerment, and the relation between memory and commemoration. It was a challenge to establish a contemporary art museum in Herzliya.

5. Miriam Chalfi - Bare Eyed

Curator Galia Bar Or presents the abstract sculptures by Miriam Chalfi, whose work is important yet seldom shown.

Main gallery: Michal Heiman - AP - Artist Proof, Asylum (The Dress 1855 - 2017)

Michal Heiman did research about the failure of photography in relation the psychiatric experiments and classifications in the 19th century. Striking to her was a mid 19th century portrait photography by Dr. Diamond of an adolescent teenage girl in a London asylum: only the dramatized 'melancholic' drawings of the portrait were published and used in his research, while the later discovered photograph shows that the girl doesn't necessarily look 'melancholic'. Another photograph of this research remembered Heiman exactly of herself in teenage years. Thus Heiman recreated the outfit that the girl was wearing, dressed in this she performs amidst her installation in the main hall of the Herzliya Museum and invites visitors to engage in conversations with her.





Discussion

The head of Education explains that the museum has over 16.000 children visiting a year. We briefly mention the collection which is fairly 'bourgeois', as Lurie says. I realize this is the total opposite of the modernist / brutalist building.

An idea that comes up: let's start more exchange, create an arena, there is a thirst to reach out to the public sphere and be more activist. Because the political is here. Lurie's suggestion is to take each personal geographic interest as a starting point, your own story.



In the evening some of us visit several openings amongst which the Helena Rubinstein pavilion and the Hamidrasha art school. Also food and punk at Zimmer followed by Arab tech house with arak from Ramalla at Annaloulou in Jaffo.



Later, we're in bar Uganda, where I talk with an artist my age. I recall how we didn't expect the lines between regions and cultures to be so blurred. He explains how 'Israel is becoming a regime.' 'They're still occupying land. And Tel Aviv is definitely a bubble, a bubble within walls. Some sort of *apartheid* is happening, around race and religion, which is extremely painful. But everyone here – people from all kinds of regions, at the art bars – is frustrated about this situation and wants to do something with it. That's why we try to change things with art. Your story stuck with me, about not being able to imagine yourself in this position. Because here, danger and war is always everywhere.'

Return to the Diaghilev Hotel.

- ZE